

fueled wars in these countries and contributed to a tidal wave of atrocities by those forces against the unarmed population. We are especially concerned about Sierra Leone, where the Revolutionary United Front controls two-thirds of the country including its most lucrative diamond resources. The RUF continues its practice of abusing, enslaving, raping and mutilating noncombatant adults and children to this day. And the international trade in Sierra Leonean diamonds appears to be undiminished.

We welcome the South African-led "Work-ing Group on African Diamonds" ("Kimberley process") supported by the diamond industry that led to the announcement of a commitment to establish an international system of "rough controls" last year. But we are dismayed by the slow pace of reform and the industry's inability to police its own members who continue to deal in diamonds from Sierra Leone and other conflict areas. We are disappointed that the principal countries involved in the mining, cutting, finishing, exporting, and importing of diamonds have not themselves taken the actions agreed to last year as a means of jump-starting the international rough controls regimen.

It seems clear that until a major importer of diamonds such as the U.S. prohibits the direct or indirect importation of any and all diamonds and diamond jewelry from any country that does not have the rough controls in place, progress in establishing the international system will proceed at a leisurely pace. For this reason, we strongly support legislation being introduced by Representatives Tony Hall, Cynthia McKinney, and Frank Wolf to enshrine such restrictions in U.S. trade law. We respectfully urge the American jewelry importers and retailers to support this initiative as well. The Hall-Wolf-McKinney bill, if enacted, would provide the diamond industry an inestimable service. Without penalizing the legitimate producers and exporters, the legislation would assure American diamond retailers and consumers of a "clean stream" of diamonds and put serious pressure on countries that fail to support the Kimberley rough controls agreement. Moreover, enactment of a U.S. prohibition on imports from countries that do not have the rough controls in place would encourage them to move forward quickly, and hasten the day that the functioning rough controls on diamonds and diamond jewelry would be truly internationalized.

We respectfully urge you to protect your own product and safeguard unwitting American consumers by supporting tight restrictions against all diamonds that emerge from countries that have not adopted the Kimberley rough controls. This is the approach that you called for in your September testimony before Congress, and it is the approach that Representatives Hall, McKinney, and Wolf have taken in their legislation. We hope that you will support it strongly, and urge its immediate adoption by Congress.

Sincerely,

Leonard S. Rubenstein, Executive Director, Physicians for Human Rights; Adotei Akwei, Africa Advocacy Director, Amnesty International, USA; Bruce Wilkinson, Senior Vice President, World Vision; Dr. Clive Calver, President, World Relief; Raymond Offenheiser, President, Oxfam America; Rabbi David Saperstein and Rabbi Dan Polish, Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism; Rev. Bob Edgar, General Secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ.

Rev. John McCullough, Executive Director, Church World Service and Witness; Nancy Aosse, President and CEO,

International Medical Corps; Stephen G. Price, Office of Justice and Peace, Society of African Missions; Wanjlru Kamau, President, African Immigrants and Refugees Foundation; Al Graham, Air Serv International; Loretta Bondi, Advocacy Director, Arms and Conflict Program, the Fund for Peace; Larry Goodwin, Executive Director, Africa Faith and Justice Network; James Matlack, Director, Washington Office, American Friends Service Committee; David Begg, CEO, Concern Worldwide U.S.; Jaydee R. Hanson, Assistant General Secretary, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, William Goodfellow, Executive Director, Center for International Policy; Beverly Lacayo, Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa; Kevin Lowther, Regional Director Africare.

Kathleen McNeely, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns; Gaspar Colon, Adventist Development and Relief Agency International; Duni Jones, Self Help Initiative; David Beckman, President, Bread for the World; Alex Yearsley, Global Witness; Rev. Seamus P. Finn, Missionary Oblate Society; Roger Winter, Executive Director, U.S. Committee for Refugees; Rev. Leon Spencer, Washington Office on Africa; Tony Doyle, Mid-South Peace and Justice Center; Maureen Healy, Society of St. Ursula; Kevin George, Friends of Liberia; Thomas Tighe, President and CEO, Direct Relief International; Farshad Rastegar, CEO, Relief International; Barry LaForgia, Executive Director, International Relief Teams.

Keith Wright, Food for the Hungry; Richenda VanLeeuwen, Executive Director, Trickle Up Program; Peter Sage, Program Director, Ananda Marga Universal Relief Teams; Jeffrey Meer, Executive Director, U.S. Association for UNHCR; Ron Mitchell, Sierra Leone Emergency Network; Gay McDougall, Executive Director, International Human Rights Law Group; Lynn McMullen, Executive Director, RESULTS; Dr. Ritchard Mabay, Chairman, Coalition for Democracy in Sierra Leone; Margaret Zeigler, Deputy Director, Congressional Hunger Center; Alfred L. Marder, President, The Amistad Committee, Inc.; Reverend Alan Thomson, International Liaison, U.S. Peace Council; Carol Fine, Chairman, NGO Committee on Southern Africa; Washington Office, Church of the Brethren; Rachel Crowder, Executive Director, African Law Initiative; American Bar Association.

Peter Vander Muelen, Coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action, Christian Reformed Church in North America; Phyllis S. Yingling, U.S. Section Chair, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Rev. Mark B. Brown, Asst. Director, International Affairs and Human Rights, Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rev. Phil Reed, Office of Justice and Peace, Missionaries of Africa; Robert Kushen, Executive Director, Doctors of the World; Joel R. Charny, Vice President for Policy, Refugees International; Brian Farenell, Advocacy Director, Friends of Guinea; Merle Bowen, Associate Professor, University of Illinois, William Martin, Professor, Binghamton University, Co-chairs, Association of Concerned Africa Scholars; Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA); Kathryn Wolford, President, Lutheran World

Relief; Randall Robinson, TransAfrica; Daniel Vollman, Africa Research Project.

Mel Foote, President, Constituency for Africa; Pharis Harvey, Executive Director, International Labor Rights Fund; Bass Vanderzalm, President, Northwest Medical Teams, International; Rev. Richard Cizik, Vice President for Governmental Affairs, National Association of Evangelicals; Fr. Rick Ryscavage, S.J., Jesuit Refugee Service/USA; Kathy Thornton, RSM, Network: National Catholic Social Justice Lobby; Yael Martin, Director, Promoting Enduring Peace; Billie Day, Friends of Sierra Leone; Hasit Thankey, Project Officer, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; Reynold Levy, President, International Rescue Committee; Gail R. Carson, Director, Relief and Food Security Programs, Counterpart International, Inc.; Paul Montacute, Director, Baptist World Aid of Baptist World Alliance; Dr. Evelyn Mauss, Physicians for Social Responsibility/NYC; Save the Children; Stephen Rickard, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial; Lonnie Turner, Washington Office, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

HONORING TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, as we in Texas celebrate Public Schools Week, March 5–9, I wish to recognize the many achievements made by public schools in Texas. At a time when Congress is debating the merits of reforming education in this country, it is important that we recognize the progress that has been made in meeting the goals of our education system and to applaud the dedicated public servants who educate our children. As an educator and a former school board member, I have witnessed first hand the tremendous effort our teachers pour into every class, every hour and every minute with their students, and it is fitting that Texas recognizes their dedication during this special week.

Public schools are the backbone of our education system. Ninety percent of the school age population nationwide attends public schools. A good, quality public education serves not only as a bridge to vast economic opportunities, but also as a foundation for our strong and prosperous democracy. Thanks to the hard work of teachers, counselors and administrators, Texas has made significant strides in its public education system, especially in student achievement.

To continue on this path of success, we must offer more to our students and families than block grants and vouchers, which serve only to redistribute resources inconsistently and damage the democratic foundation of public schools. We must capitalize on our success and increase our efforts to modernize Texas classrooms, maintain a teacher ratio that places students in a personal learning environment with well-trained teachers, and ensure security and safety. The sad events this week in California remind us of the dangers in